

T.E.A.L.A.: THE EDUCATIONAL ANIMAL LINK ADVANTAGE

by

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Abstract

Schools are changing to accommodate twenty-first century families with more attention on the development of social and emotional learning for students entering elementary school. This project provides a manual that is suitable for the integration of animals into a classroom with a purpose for social emotional learning. By using therapy dogs in schools, the animal would serve a dual purpose of working with students who require support, as well as teaching social emotional learning, focusing on empathy. The manual is influenced by current social emotional learning programs and the benefits of animal assisted for atypical learners with autism. The lesson plans in the manual include activities designed to teach different emotions using stories of animals that would help students make connections to the emotions of the animal and others and eventually to recognize emotions in one self.

Social-emotional learning, Animal assisted therapy, empathy,

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Chapter One

Introduction

Looking at our elementary schools today, teachers and staff are exposed to many innovative ways to teach our learners by building on social emotional skills, identifying and managing behavioural needs, meeting the challenges of our diverse classrooms and learning to overcome these challenges and creating an environment where students are successful, both academic and socially. Imagine a school that provided an opportunity for students to create a bond with an animal that could assist students in all areas of learning. I believe schools can provide a positive learning environment, through the use of animal assisted therapy for many different needs, such as learning supports, behavioural supports and emotional supports. The use of animals can help teachers to connect with our students with disabilities or behavioural needs within an elementary school setting potentially creating a learning environment that is all inclusive. With the unconditional love, attention and acceptance a furry friend can provide, schools could use animals as a strategy for success; for students to feel safe and comfortable at school, building confidence in their ability to learn as well develop skills such as empathy, compassion, and kindness with an animal as their guidance.

Significance of the Project

Animal Assisted Therapy is beginning to become more popular in North America within counselling positions and school settings, providing comfort to students and welcoming them into a lower stress environment where students are able to feel that unconditional support and acceptance an animal can provide. Quite commonly dogs, cats and horses are used for Animal Assisted Therapy but many other smaller animals are also used

(Chandler, 2001). Animals can be successful in school settings to bring joy and happiness to the environment, as well as providing a service such as teaching students about kindness and compassion. It has been noted that animals in a school setting have been proven to enhance humane attitudes towards animals, therefore creating more empathetic attitudes towards others (Chandler, 2001). Animal assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal-oriented program that is used to develop emotional, social, cognitive and physical functioning with the use of animals in order to enhance quality of life and increase socialization (Vincent, Kropp, & Byrne, 2014). As more information on animal assisted therapy is becoming available, I suggest the need to explore the benefits in an elementary school acknowledging teachers are beginning to see more challenges with social emotional learning in the classroom.

Background of Project

In researching the topic of therapy dogs in a school environment, I came across a program called Charlotte's Litter (Charlotte's Litter, 2013). In reading this program I learned this program was designed after the horrific shooting that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary school in 2012. A family of one of the students' shot created a program using therapy dogs to support and comfort the students that went back to school after this very traumatic event (Herman, 2015). After reading about this program, I then became motivated to create a program with a focus on therapy dogs and teaching empathy. If teachers can teach students to be empathetic towards an animal, such as a dog, then maybe it is possible to teach students to be more empathetic towards one another creating a much more harmonious environment as school. Charlotte's Litter is a program developed to help administrators and educators bring a therapy dog to their school (Charlotte's Litter, 2013). I was inspired by this program and felt the only thing they did not include was a manual on how a teacher can use

the animal assisted therapy dog to teach social emotional learning both for students of special needs and typical students in the class, as well as maintaining curricular components.

Personal Location

This project is important to me as I have recently trained my dog, Teala, as a therapy dog. I have been working with my four-year-old Labrador retriever since she was a puppy to take her down the path of a therapy dog. Having worked in a school with a therapy dog, I was inspired to train my dog as I saw such an incredible response to a classroom animal. The learning environment was calm and the students learned how to take care of their classroom dog. Students who struggled with learning were able to identify when they needed a break and were able to use the dog as a strategy to calm down. If teachers can provide a calm learning environment, they might be able to see success for all different kinds of learners in the class. Teachers would be able to maximize our inclusivity so every student could feel successful. I continue to see areas in which an animal would be beneficial for student with disabilities such as autism or emotional behaviour disorders as they may not have the correct ways of showing proper emotions necessary for particular situations. I began to wonder if student can learn emotions not just from the teacher, but rather an animal. My curiosity grew as I watched my current Kindergarten class participate in a program called Roots of Empathy; a program designed to teach children about empathy with the example of a baby. The baby visited once a month to the classroom and the children were able to watch this baby grow and develop. In witnessing the success of this program with five and six-year olds, ideas flowed and my excitement grew as I finally figured out my dog's purpose, not only to fetch a ball and be my companion, but rather to help children through their educational journey as a teacher, cozy companion or a student's tool for success. Can Teala,

the therapy dog, teach students about emotions? Can they relate to a dog and in turn learn what it means to be empathetic? In my project, I have focused on incorporating therapy animals into a classroom through a set of lesson plans that will teach students first, by introducing animals into the classroom followed by teaching students about empathy. Through this project, lessons have been created for teachers to administer to their classes from Kindergarten to grade three teaching skills that address the different stages of emotions and how a therapy animal, in particular a dog, can be used as a tool to emotionally support students in a classroom. Student will be able to learn about emotions through activities that involve weekly visits with animals in the classroom. The areas of focus throughout this project include social emotional learning, animal assisted support, students with special needs and how these topics connect to one another. The goal of this project is to find a way to include all learners in learning, including students who portray atypical behaviours and their effects on the classroom environment and how they can benefit from animal assisted therapy, along with typical learners in the classroom and their relationship with therapy animals. In the next chapter, I will explore the questions as to why it is beneficial for a therapy dog to be a part of a learning environment and who will benefit. Through the exploration of social emotional learning and animal assisted therapy program, I have developed a teacher manual that is suitable for the integration of animals into a classroom with a purpose for learning.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

An increasing demand for social and emotional competencies has become one of the focuses for twenty-first century learning in elementary schools. Studies have shown that child-parent interaction prior to preschool can have a strong positive or negative effect on social emotional development in young children, (Denham, Renwick, & Holt, 1991); therefore more literature is available on the topic of children and their social and emotion development. Learning emotions is not an easy task for children on their own, and most often children rely on their parents for guidance and lasting impressions. Children whose parents view emotions in a positive way are more likely to nurture a child's emotional development as opposed to parents who ignore emotions or minimize their child's emotions (Castro, Halberstadt, Lozada, & Craig, 2014). Larsen (2007) stated that older children are more likely to experience mixed emotions compared to younger children due to their developmental age. If children struggle to identify mixed emotions at a younger age, are they able to understand and reflect upon their own emotions, regulate their emotions and are they able to understand what empathy is and recognize it among peers? There is a need to encourage positive development and to prevent behaviours that could become problematic due to a lack in social emotional competencies (Larsen, To, & Fireman, 2007; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). There are many studies on this current topic of social emotional learning and development and its connection to learning disabilities. This literature review will cover the topics of social emotional development and the use of animal assisted therapy as a means of addressing emotional developmental needs in children and children with special needs. An additional goal of this literature review will be to explore whether it is possible for animal-assisted

therapy to aid in developing emotions and teaching empathy. In reviewing the literature, studies were reviewed from databases such as JSTOR, ERIC and PsycINFO and used to compare different programs available for teaching social emotional learning and empathy to elementary school students. A content analysis was conducted to determine the strengths and weaknesses of social emotional programs already in use, as well as examining programs using therapy animals as a form of teaching. Programs addressing the topic of teaching empathy, and emotions were also explored.

What is Social Emotional Learning?

Social emotional learning is defined as the ability to recognize ones' emotions, manage emotions, establish and maintain positive goals, positive relationships and making decisions in an emotionally competent manner. Social emotional learning requires one to be able to understand the interpersonal situations needed to handle a social situation (Durlak, Weissberg, Schellinger, Dymnicki, & Taylor, 2011). Schools and teachers play an important role in developing social emotional learning for all ages. Durlak et al. (2011) stated social emotional learning has many benefits on children's success in both their schooling and in their life. Social emotional development in young children has been highlighted as an important foundation for future success and well-being. It is a way for young children to learn about their own well-being and it is identified to be an important skill to have prior to entering school (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Weissberg & O'Brien (2004) stated that life for children has changed during the twenty-first century in multiple ways including "increased economic and social pressures on families, easier access to media that encourages health-damaging behavior, and weakening of social institutions that were once expected to fulfill emotional and social needs of growing children, such as family, church and

community” (p.87). The twenty-first century has not only changed for families, but it has changed for schools too, with more attention needed on the development of social and emotional learning as students increasingly lack social and emotional competencies (Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). According to The National Academy of Sciences, less than half of children entering school have the social and emotional skills traditionally required for Kindergarten (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012).

Teaching Social Emotional Learning:

Effectiveness of Intervention Programs

Research has shown that in order for social and emotional development to be taught in schools, teachers and social emotional learning (SEL) programs play an important role in learning. The effectiveness of social-emotional learning programs is derived from formal lessons being taught. Literature supports the effectiveness of explicit instruction of SEL programs taught to young children and the results have demonstrated positive effects on both cognitive and academic outcomes. A program called *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program* was used to explicitly teach young children, in Australia, social and emotional skills and competencies. Studies have been completed on the positive results of the study, but a controlled study investigating the effects had not been completed. This study supported the view that social-emotional competence is the foundation for academic achievement and well-being of young children. Ashdown and Bernard (2012) identified the limitations of the study to be a small sample size of participants, due to the fact that only one school was involved in the study. Some early childhood scholars disagree with explicit, teacher led instruction as they feel it is not appropriate for teaching social and emotional learning. Early childhood scholars believe that social and emotional learning should be

achieved by creating environments where adults respond in a way that is personalized to the child's needs (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Other areas this study did not address were areas with schools with diverse needs. Students selected for this study were all reported to be from low socio-economic status, which identified a specific need for social emotional learning attention in students with low socio-economic status, but the study fails to address social emotional needs in other socio-economic categories such as middle and high class. This study could have further connected to other programs that are available with the use of explicit instruction that focuses on teaching social emotional learning to children. In comparison, Anderson (2010) studied the effects of incorporating dogs into a classroom with students of low socio-economic status to see the benefits. The students benefiting in the study were mainly students with severe emotional disorders. The effectiveness of the animal in the classroom provides more evidence to support animal in the classroom (Anderson & Olson, 2010).

Studies are continuing to explore programs suitable for teaching social emotional learning. Weissberg and O'Brien (2004) researched three programs teaching social and emotional learning that have effectively and successfully been implemented in schools. Each program approaches social emotional learning in different ways, but they are all able to positively link social emotional learning development and academic performances. The commonalities of the three programs include the use of peer relationships to foster social and emotional learning and developing emotional awareness. Two of the programs work to build on family relationships, connecting teachers, students and home (Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). One main shortcoming of these programs is that some students have little family involvement in their schooling, whether it is due to two parents working all the time, low

socio-economic situations or a lack of attention from their parents. With these programs relying heavily on family support, the successes of the programs may be impaired and social emotional learning outcomes damaged. This could weaken any apparent positive effects the intervention programs may have.

Social Emotional Programs:

Fun FRIENDS

Social emotional learning programs that are believed to have significant positive effects are programs in which universal preventions and promotions are encouraged. SEL programs that focus on universal instruction increase their likelihood of success in teaching social-emotional competence and therefore show improvements towards attitudes of self, others and school, and pro-social behaviours. (Raimundo & Marques-Pinto, 2010). The FRIENDS program, developed by Dr. Paula Barrett, was designed as a universal prevention program that supports emotional resiliency. This program consists of Learning/ Behaviour, Cognitive and Physiological components. The word FRIENDS is an acronym and was chosen to remind program participants of the steps to take when feeling anxious; F- Feeling worried? R- Relax and feeling good, I- I can do it! E- Explore solutions and coping step plan, N- Now reward yourself, D-Don't forget to practice and S- Stay cool! (Rodgers & Dunsmuir, 2015). The program's original focus targeted the treatment of childhood anxiety through cognitive behavioural therapy interventions programs; a program which is designed to prevent, but also treat childhood anxieties. The FRIENDS program is not only designed for treatment of anxiety through intervention or preventative practice, but rather to address and enhance children's emotional resilience. FRIENDS is a program that has shown positive effects on emotional resilience through the ten week sessions with target groups of nine and

ten year olds and has shown reduced levels of anxiety and better self-esteem (Stallard et al., 2005).

An extension of the FRIENDS program is a version created for children ages four to seven called Fun FRIENDS. Fun FRIENDS consists of five components that directly link to social emotional learning through a sense of self, social skills, self-regulation, and responsibility for other and prosocial behaviours. Fun FRIENDS is designed with the effective model of universal prevention with a focus on promoting protective factors like social well-being and preventing the onset of possible social anxieties (Barrett, Fisak, & Cooper, 2015). As more research on anxiety and social emotional learning is unveiled, studies are being conducted to determine the effectiveness of programs like FRIENDS. Carlyle (2014) studied the effects of Fun FRIENDS on preschool aged children with anxiety disorder. Her findings indicated a decrease in anxiety diagnosis and improvements in children's resiliency post intervention. However, there are considerable limitations in this study affecting the impact of its conclusions as further research needs to be completed since no control group was tested. Additional long term research into the study could help demonstrate if there are robust lasting effects beyond the programs immediate time frame (Carlyle, 2014).

Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy (ROE), an evidence-based program, created by Mary Gordon to increase empathy in a classroom by raising social and emotional competencies and reducing the levels of aggression in school aged children (Gordon & Green, 2004). As seen as an intervention program, ROE was developed to focus on social emotional understanding, promoting prosocial behaviour and decreasing aggression and increasing knowledge about

infant development through the use of an infant under a year old and a parent to visit once a month over the nine month period of instruction (Schonert-Reichl, Smith, Zaidman-Zait, & Hertzman, 2012). ROE is tailored to support students from kindergarten to grade 8 through discussions on perspective taking, child development, interactions and observations focusing on the development of student's emotions. The infant is used as a catalyst to discuss feelings like compassion, empathy and building on student's ability to identify feelings and talking about their own feelings (Andrew, 2000). ROE connects what the infant is doing to how the students feel when they observe the infant. Throughout the ROE program, students are able better understand empathy and shift from focussing on the infant's physical needs to being able to identify the infant's emotional needs (Grantham, 1999).

Comparable to the FRIENDS program, ROE was designed as an intervention program to support social emotional competency through increasing positive behaviour and prevent problematic behaviours. Through curricular components reflecting theories and research of development, children learn lessons that can then be applied in other aspects of their life not just in the ROE program (Gordon & Green, 2004). Schonert-Reichl et al., (2012) examined the effectiveness of ROE on children's emotional understanding to determine the development of emotion and its link to children's social environment. The study identified an increase in prosocial behaviours in comparison to the children in the control group as well as a decrease in proactive and reactive aggression. The value of both the FRIENDS and ROE programs is that they support the effectiveness of SEL programs implemented to improve their target goal (Carlyle, 2014; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Limitations to the ROE program in this particular study indicated the multiple layers of lessons and topics of focus made it difficult to determine the specific factor attributing to

social emotional development and understanding (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Within these detailed social emotional programs, further research is required to identify SEL programs using animals such as therapy animals in order to improve social emotional learning.

Improving Academic Achievement

Weissberg and O'Brien (2004) concluded that social and emotional learning is a framework for addressing the increasing demands of students in school. The evidence on social and emotional programs continues to demonstrate strong findings and program implementation correlates with improved well-being of students as well as their successes in school through proper instruction of social and emotional learning. To increase academic achievement among students who struggle with social and emotional learning, students must be able to manage emotions as it could impede their learning (Durlak et al., 2011). Due to the multitude of students coming into schools with low social and emotional skills, a lack of connection is being formed in students moving from elementary school to middle school which in turn may negatively affect students' academic and behavioural success in school. Through integrating social emotional learning into the classroom with quality instruction, students are able to learn through a safe and comfortable environment fostering skills such as self-awareness, self-management and social awareness. Current findings on social emotional programs identified that using social emotional learning programs had significant positive effects on social and emotional learning for students. There were connections to improvements in academic achievement and students' prosocial behaviour increased (Durlak et al., 2011). With social emotional learning having such positive effects on students' academic achievements and prosocial behaviours, then the use of teacher instruction should be utilized in classrooms to promote social emotional learning.

Social emotional learning has been defined as the ability to recognize one's emotions and more, but it can also be defined as an "approach that teaches individuals to recognize and express the social and emotional aspects of their lives" (Norris, 2003 p. 314). Social emotional learning is not a program, but there are programs to implement social emotional learning into the classroom. Although studies have shown that programs are effective in teaching social emotional learning, Norris (2003) identified social emotional learning as being part of the teacher's organizational routines and classroom management systems that support and create a positive environment where social emotional learning can grow and develop. If children learn best and develop social emotional competencies in a safe, caring environment, then more research is needed on how to facilitate teachers in implementing this practice.

Social Emotional Learning and Special Needs:

Children with Learning Disabilities

In the context of social emotional learning, there are many active research areas which can be addressed; one of those topics relates to the issues of students with special needs understanding emotions in themselves and others. Social emotional learning can be a particularly hard topic for students with learning disabilities, or any disabilities, as many students with special needs also struggle with social settings. Students with learning disabilities can have difficulties building social relationship with peers and often struggle with interactions with peers and adults. Students with learning disabilities are often less likely to understand their social environment, and may lack understandings of complex interactions due to a possible lack of communication skills, as seen in non-verbal students, or cognitive impairments that would prevent social understanding (Elias, 2004). Social

emotional learning is therefore important for students with learning disabilities as it can create inclusion in the classroom and skills taught through social emotional learning are skills students with disabilities commonly lack. Elias (2004) identified three skill areas of social emotional learning to assist students with learning disabilities to bridge the gap of relating emotions which are recognized as areas where social emotional learning provides interventions for learning disabled students. These three skills are i) recognizing emotions in one's self and other, ii) regulating and managing strong emotions and iii) connecting strengths and areas of need. Part of being able to identify feelings among one's self, individuals must recognize their feeling vocabulary; an area in which students with learning disabilities tend to struggle with the identification of their own emotion (Elias, 2004).

Learning strategies such as using anger thermometer tools can help students identify and manage their emotions- an anger thermometer tool is an image of a thermometer and is used for students to identify if they are calm or angry using the visual thermometer. Although this article is very informative, little connection is made between the appropriate intervention and how to teach students with learning disabilities social emotional skills.

Emotions and Autism

In studying social emotional learning and the correlation to special needs, it is important to identify students who may find social emotional learning to be challenging. Perhaps no group struggles more in developing social emotional skills than autistic children whose defining characteristic is a limited ability to recognize emotions. Emotional recognition is an important part of everyday communication both in and out of the classroom, and plays a crucial role in social interactions by confirming contextual understanding of a conversation. (Ryan & Charragain, 2010). Autistic children are often

unable to recognize many facial expressions, which in turn erects a non-verbal barrier in communicating with others. Currently, the vast majority of published literature suggests that children with disabilities, such as autistic children, have difficulties with social relationships (Elias, 2004). Ryan and Charragain (2010) studied the effect of teaching children with autism different elements of faces through identifying facial expressions, such as happy or sad in order to teach autistic students about emotions. The results of this study suggest that relatively simple emotions such as happiness and sadness are readily identified by autistic children and performance was close to average, but autistic children had more difficulty with more complex emotions such as surprise. It is clear that in order to create an effective and enduring SEL strategy for autistic children, further research is required for a better understanding of the theory of mind skills and how they uniquely pertain to children with autism.

Animal Assisted Therapy

Human and animal interactions are becoming increasingly important in our society as research has shown the positive effects of human- animal interactions and their influence on an individual's well-being (Yap, Scheinberg, & Williams, 2017). The concept of therapeutic animals is not a new phenomenon, as farmers have used animals for therapeutic reasons for centuries and research on dolphin, canine and horse therapy is available among the literature, but research on animal assisted therapy and its relationship with children with disabilities is rather limited (Yap et al., 2017). With a constant stream of new findings on animal assisted therapy, it has not been forgotten that Boris Levinson was the original pioneer of animal assisted therapy. His pioneering work as a child psychologist in the 1960s identified that "dogs acted as a 'social lubricant' between the therapist and child" (Friesen, 2010, p.262),

recognizing the affinity children have towards animals and therefore creating a more relaxed environment that is created with the presence of an animal (Friesen, Exploring animal-assisted programs with children in school and therapeutic contexts, 2010).

Animal assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal-oriented program that is used to develop emotional, social, cognitive and physical functioning with the use of animals in order to enhance quality of life and increase socialization. Research on animal assisted therapy and animal assisted activities are becoming more available in relation to working with disabilities and fostering of social relationships and emotions. Literature has focused on the social relationship and interactions during animal assisted therapy with children and has said to be an effective treatment tool (Vincent, Kropp, & Byrne, 2014). The key role of animal assisted therapy in our elementary schools is to provide an opportunity for students to learn about socially important behaviours, learning about emotions and how to manage them, as well as engaging in positive peer interactions (Baumgartner & Cho, 2014). Animal assisted therapy encourages connections through social emotional learning and benefits both the child and the animal.

Influence of Animals on Child Development

Through identifying the stages of development in children, animals can have a direct link to the success of social and emotional development when a companion animal is present in their life (Endenburg & van Lith, 2011). In breaking down the stages of development, evidence supports the involvement of companion animals and its positive effects on social, emotional and cognitive development. As seen in a 9-month study in a school classroom, a child's self-esteem development increased due to the presence of a companion animal in the classroom leading researchers to believe companion animals can aid in a child's emotional

development (Endenburg & van Lith, 2011). This literature connects to Weissberg and O'Brien's (2004) study on the social emotional programs with proper teacher instruction improving student well-being; therefore, further studies should be completed on the impact of companion animals in a school setting and the connection to social emotional development in children.

In addition to the increase in positive social interactions and the child's general well-being, researchers have highlighted another important area of social development emphasized by companion animals. Children with companion animals are more likely to learn empathy through animals and in turn will be able to detect emotions and empathy in other people. Studies have shown that children with a connection to an animal such as a companion animal will often have an increasingly positive attitude towards animals and demonstrate more empathy (Endenburg & van Lith, 2011). With such a small amount of literature indicating the positive effect of social development and empathy with the assistance of animals, more research is required on the lasting effects of empathy introduced by incredible child-animal bonds. Cognitive development, in respect to companion animals, also was reported on; with finding of improvements among children with an animal bond indicating that animals are a "powerful motivators for learning" (Endenburg & van Lith, 2011, p. 211) as students will retain more information learned if they are emotionally investing in their learning. Moreover, studies on companion animals and cognitive learning suggested people with disabilities could concentrate better when they worked with animals (Endenburg & van Lith, 2011). Companionship in animals has been noted in the research for having an incredible bond between animal and owner and contributed to the physiological well-being of both children and adults alike. Endenburg and van Lith (2012) stated social

animals such as dogs have a natural tendency to bond with people, while maintaining a calm, lower stress environment which provides many with comfort and ease through different therapeutic situations in life. The preliminary findings seemed to encourage positive experiences in the social and emotional development of a child with a companion animal present; more research needs to be explored, in depth, between animal bonds and child development.

Influence of Therapy Dogs

The influence of animal assisted therapy with the use of dogs in particular, on social emotional learning gains continues to be a topic of much research. Friesen (2010) stated that children have shown benefits for physiological, social, physical, and emotional strengths due to the presence and interaction of an animal. Dogs and their non-judgemental bond with people have allowed children to be calmer in situations previously stressful to the child. Research has noted the use of dogs have helped students in elementary schools increase their self-esteem and overall emotional stability at school, by providing the unconditional love and unique bond of an animal (Friesen, Exploring animal-assisted programs with children in school and therapeutic contexts, 2010). Comparative studies have identified dogs to bring a calming element as they have been able to moderate stress, reduce anxiety and lower blood pressure for children in many situations (Jalongo, Astorino, & Bomboy, 2004).

Another study identifies the human-animal bond that is often shared between a dog and its owner. This bond allows dog owners to communicate with animals by using different tones in their voice to receive particular responses. Dogs communicate their emotions in a very clear manner, which has been noted to increase children's emotional awareness due to observing dog's social interactions (Stetina et al., 2011). The results of this study found

children increased their ability to read the emotions of dogs, through facial expressions and in turn related those emotions of an animal to humans. The shortcomings of this article include the length of the study, which makes it difficult to see the effect over time, as well, whether the emotional recognition has to do with the excitement of an animal being present and working with children (Stetina et al., 2011).

This study presents positive research conclusions on the effectiveness of an animal in an elementary classroom.

Moving beyond the classroom and into the workplace, therapy animals are being considered as a support in the work environment as the effects are similar to those of the classroom setting. With benefits of reduced stress and positive social interacts, the idea of therapy dogs are becoming more acceptable in the workplace (Foreman, Glenn, Meade, & Wirth, 2017). There are gaps in the research regarding the long term effects of having an animal in the work environment, especially considering the animal may not be used to being around people for long periods of time. Foreman et al., (2017) suggested the importance of devising a strategic plan to having the dog in the working environment, for there are challenges to be overcome in regards to the health and well-being of both the animals and the humans in all environments.

Therapy Animals and Learning

The presence of a dog and the relationship created with the child has shown positive effects in the areas of education, such as reading, increasing a child's desire to read. Studies have identified programs, such as Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.), demonstrating success in student reading with the assistance of a reading therapy dog partner. Children who struggled with reading increased their reading fluency after spending

only twenty minutes a week reading with a therapy dog (Jalongo et al., 2004). Parents of children who participated in the R.E.A.D. program stated noticeable increases in enthusiasm for reading and improved confidence in their children was evident through the use of this program (Friesen & Delisle, 2012). This program provided a variety of different benefits beyond reading skills, such as reduction in school absences, increase in confidences and strong empathic relationships with the dog (Lane & Zavada, 2013).

Not only is the use of a therapy dog assisting in reading fluency, but overall academic achievement is increasing simply reflecting the presence of a dog through animal assisted activities which motivates student learning. Comparable studies show an increase in student motivation and confidence in reading during dog reading programs (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2013). A continuous theme of increased social interactions and empathy are recognized across the literature and continue to support animal assisted therapy in learning due to the positive effects on student self-esteem and gained confidence. Bassette and Taber-Doughty (2013) studied the relationships between reading fluency and dog interactions, and the overall impact animals have on students with emotional behaviour disorders. Increased reading and on-task behaviour demonstrated effectiveness of therapy dog visitations during reading. It was evident in this study that students who engage in reading with an animal showed increased engagement in their given task during the intervention period and students were able to continue to show interest in reading after the study was completed. Although this study was completed as a single case study, the findings implied further research is necessary linking to children with disabilities such as emotional behavioral disorder and literacy.

Animals have demonstrated many positive attributes that are deemed suitable for the classroom in many different aspects of learning and developing. Meadan and Jegatheesan (2010) discuss the multiple ways in which animals can contribute as social and emotional learning strategies in the classroom, including teaching feeling and emotions, problem solving, enhancing communication and building friendship. These are all skills that help children develop socially, emotionally and behaviourally. Through these skills, with animals, children are able to enhance acceptance, and build on inclusivity among a classroom to include children with special needs to aid in the success for all learners (Meadan & Jegatheesan, 2010). This article does not address the challenges of having an animal in the school environment, for example, the situation children with allergies or fear of animals. Further research on the practical application of this intervention program would be beneficial.

Animal Assisted Therapy and Special Needs

The literature regarding animal assisted therapy among children with autism and cerebral palsy and other paediatric disabilities has reported positive displays of human emotion when visited by an animal. In a survey completed by participants working in a hospital environment with children with disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder and acquired brain injuries, participants identified animal assisted therapy to most definitely assist physical and behaviour management of children with such disabilities. The survey also identified animal assisted therapy to be beneficial to children with autism to calm them down and manage their behaviour, as well as provide emotional regulation, but mainly providing companionship to all three disabilities noted in the study (Yap et al., 2017). Research suggests children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder would also benefit

from animal assisted interventions as it could create an emotional response in children that will increase motivation for learning (Schuck, Emmerson, Fine, & Lakes, 2015).

Socialization, Anxiety and Animal Assisted Therapy

Similar to the behavioural traits of children with autism, research has stated that children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can experience anxiety and trouble with socialization (Vincent et al., 2014). Social anxiety in children can have an enormous impact on a child's social emotional outcome. Children demonstrating social anxieties often have real and perceived negative social interactions or emotional challenges (Weeks, Coplan, & Kingsbury, 2009). With research identifying the advantages of animal assisted therapy for children with disabilities, parallels in treatment can be made for children diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Vincent et al., (2014) stated that animals have the ability to reduce anxiety in patients with epilepsy and may be able to reduce anxieties for individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Based on the current literature, individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders would benefit from therapeutic interactions with animals potentially increasing their socializations and reducing anxieties (Vincent et al., 2014). Further research is needed to learn more about animal assisted therapy, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, and social anxieties among individuals.

Autism and Animal Assisted Therapy

Evidence suggests that there individuals with autism may seek interactions from animals on their own, and that animal assisted therapy instructors need only to facilitate their natural gravitation towards the animal to gain the benefits. A previous study on animal assisted therapy demonstrated increasing social behaviours in children with autism spectrum disorder with the presence of a guinea pig in the classroom. Children were more engaged in

social behaviours with the guinea pigs than they were with regular classroom toys (O'Haire, McKenzie, McCune, & Slaughter, 2014). This current study builds on the use of a guinea pig in the classroom and measuring the impact of an animal in the classroom for an 8 week period of time, involving an animal assisted activities program. Upon completion of the program half of the guinea pigs were adopted by the teachers and half by the families that participated in the study and parents identified more social appropriate behaviours and less social withdrawal behaviours in their children after the program. Further research can be extended on the connection between children with autism and therapy dogs. In addition, more research can be completed on emotional development and children with autism using a therapy dog as a facilitator (O'Haire et. al.,2014). Overall, the research has conveyed a message that animal assisted therapy could most definitely benefit student success through emotional, social and behaviour challenges within all aspects of child learning and developing and there are more areas in which research can build more evidence on the topic of animal assisted therapy.

Summary

Throughout this literature review I have discussed the successes from the preliminary research available on animal assisted therapy and its influence on child development. In relation to our need for increased social emotional development in schools, integration of animals into schools is proving to highlight important discoveries on the benefits towards our learners through social, emotional and cognitive development. The studies presented in this literature review have provided informative studies on animal assisted therapy, leaving room for more research and discovery on the benefits of therapy animals. The connection of animal assisted therapy and children with disabilities has narrowed the topic to which I

would like to pursue further, research with a focus on the development of empathy, questioning whether animal assisted therapy can be implemented as a program, addressing gaps in social emotional learning while maintaining inclusion of individuals in the classroom. By using therapy dogs in schools, the animal would serve a dual purpose of working with students who require support, as well as teaching social emotional learning, focusing on empathy. Can children show empathy to a dog and in turn recognize what empathy looks like in humans?

Chapter Three: Taking Pawsitive Steps Program

Introduction

I believe students can learn a lot through the love of an animal and therefore I have developed a program, or set of lesson plans, for teachers to use to teach students empathy and other emotions with the use of an animal. I have named this program *Taking Pawsitive Steps* for it is a way to understand our feelings and emotions through the love of an animal in a positive way. Taking Pawsitive steps is designed to integrate animal assisted therapy into a school setting. We know that dogs, in particular, are very good at supplying unconditional love to any human they meet and we can learn a lot from their unconditional support. This program focuses on teaching students empathy by building on their compassion for animals. Throughout Taking Pawsitive Steps, students are learning how to show respect and kindness to the animal in the classroom, learning about feelings, comparing the needs of animals and humans and learning ways in which animals can teach people. For the safety of all, including the animal, it is important to teach students, staff and parents about the animal coming into your school. Be sure to review the suggested steps included to introducing your therapy dog to its school.

Description of Taking Pawsitive Steps

In this program there are lesson plans for teachers to follow that are simple and easy to integrate into the classroom with minimal preparations required. Included are lists of stories that can be read to students using animals as the main characters and activities to be completed. The theme of all lesson plans will be empathy, but each lesson will connect to empathy in many different ways; for example, teaching children about emotions will make it easier to learning how other people feel so it is important to include some lessons on

emotions. Along with lesson plans for teachers to use to focus on teaching empathy, I have included lesson on integrating a therapy animal into the classroom or school (I use a dog for the examples). I believe it is important to learn rules on how to keep the animal safe, and the human's safe by teaching students how to be attentive to how the animal is feelings. For example, if a dog has its tail between its legs, then it is probably scared and students need to know how they can help rather than harm the animal.

There are many different skills used to teach empathy to children; I cover six skills of empathy within this teacher manual. The goals of the student are to be able to recognize the many emotions in our world by learning to be compassionate and how we can learn from animals, and also how animals can learn from us.

Objectives of Taking Pawsitive Steps program

The objectives of this program are to teach children to be aware of your own feelings and how you think someone else is feeling. Students working with this program will be able to identify the difference between animals and humans, help other people feel better and students participating in this program within a school will learn how to safely treat animals working in schools. The first area of focus within this program is to identify what makes you happy. By starting with a story about a puppy, students can connect how the puppy might be feeling. For example, if the puppy is playing with its toys and wagging its tail, there is a good chance the puppy is happy. You would then want to show students what a happy dog looks like by demonstrating (if you have a therapy dog in the classroom during this lesson), or by showing pictures of happy dogs. By showing how dogs can be happy, you will then discuss what makes the students happy. Part of the program is intended to have a therapy animal assisting these lessons, but also to be there when the students are working to help students

who may struggle due to the unconditional love of an animal, and the non-judgement attitudes an animal shares. There are many different needs within a classroom, such as a student who may have trouble working independently would benefit from an animal by them while they complete their work. Throughout this project, the role of the therapy animal would be there as a teaching tool and strategy for students with a goal of creating a successful learning environment for all learners.

Taking Pawsitive Steps:
Learning Empathy through our animals



Taking Pawsitive Steps

~ A way to understand our feelings and emotions through the love of an animal~

Taking Pawsitive steps is a program designed to integrate animal assisted therapy into a school setting. We know that dogs, in particular, are very good at supplying unconditional love to any human they meet and we can learn a lot from their unconditional support.

This program focuses on teaching students empathy by building on their compassion for animals. Throughout Taking Pawsitive Steps, students are learning how to show respect and kindness to the animal in the classroom, learning about feelings, comparing the needs of animals and humans and learning ways in which animals can teach people.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson plans were designed for the use of implementing a Chocolate Labrador Retriever therapy dog in an elementary school in British Columbia. Even though this program focuses on lessons with a therapy dog, it can be modified to work around any kind of animal. For the safety of all, including the animal, it is important to teach students, staff and parents about the animal coming into your school. Be sure to review the suggested steps included to introducing your therapy dog to its school.



Taking Pawsitive Steps Program: Learning empathy through our animals

B.C. Curricular

Components

Career Education K-3

Big Ideas: Everything we learn helps us develop our skills.

Content: roles and responsibilities at home.


Physical Education K-3


Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.


Content: caring behaviours in groups and families and emotions and their causes and effects.


By presenting the big ideas, teachers can choose the learning standards they would like to address with in the curricular competencies and content.

Overview of program


 6 lesson plans covering skills of empathy, compassion and how we can learn from animals and how animals can learn from us.


 Each lesson includes extensions and adaptations and can be used with any animal


 Lesson Plans: designed for K-3 students, approximately 30 min in length for each lesson plan


 Lesson plans for introducing your animal to can be found in this program.

Objectives

 To become aware of your own feelings and how you might think someone else is feeling.

 To be able to identify the difference between animals and humans.

 To be able to help others feel better.

 To learn how to safely treat animals working in schools.

Adaptations/Extensions

For those students with allergies, this program can be run using a toy dog. The purpose of having a dog in the classroom is for students to make the connection to the animal. If a toy animal can create the same response for students, then the goal of the program has been reached.

Materials

Your therapy animal is a key component of this program and is to be used during each lesson.

Supplemental material for Talking Pawsitive Steps

Taking Pawsitive Steps provides a booklet for students to complete during their time with their therapy animal. Booklet is to be assembled prior to completion of program.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 1: Observing our Therapy Animal

Lesson Overview


Objectives


This lesson is the introduction lesson to Talking Pawsitive Steps. A therapy dog was used for these activities, but can be adapted for any animal. Students will meet the animal and learn about the rules to having a therapy animal in the classroom and they will complete activities to get familiar with the therapy animal.


Curricular connection


Physical Education K-3


Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy


 Begin by having the class sit in a circle on either the carpet or central gathering area. Introduce the therapy animal to the class, but asking the students to look with their eyes and not touching with their hands. There will be excitement with the new animal, so allow for students some time to taking it in. Before having the students touch the animal, explain there are going to be some rule they must learn first.


 Start by reading “Tails Are Not for Pulling” by Elizabeth Verdick. It is a simple story to let children know that tails are for wagging, not pulling.


 After reading the book discuss with the class some of the things mentioned in the story.
Ex. Animals let us know when they don’t want to be touched by growling or making sounds. Tails are for wagging and not pulling.

 Once the book has been discussed take some time to talk about the therapy animal in the classroom. Talk about their likes and dislikes and some special qualities about your animal.

 Talk to your students about the purpose of your therapy dog, which is to teach is about our emotions and feelings and to support us in the classroom to help us learn.

 Together, as a class, build class rules appropriate for your therapy animal in your classroom and building such as how many student can pet the animal, who gets to care for the animal and make sure they have what they need, ways to keep the animal safe and how to keep the students safe around the animal.

 Once the rules have been made around the classroom animal, introduce their animal to everyone in the classroom.

 Following the introduction of the classroom animal, have each student start their Pawsitive Steps booklet. The first page is to draw a picture and write about their classroom animal.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 2: What makes you Happy?

Lesson Overview

This lesson will introduce the therapy dog into the classroom. “Love me gently” by Lisa Wiehebrink (2012) will be read followed by a discussion on how to make an animal happy and not hurting the animal.







Objectives

Students will learn to treat an animal kindly and identify what things make your animal happy, what hurts compared to what makes you happy and what hurts.

Curricular connection

Physical Education K-3

Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.

-  Start the lesson by reading “Love me gently” by Lisa Wiehebrink (2012). This story is about a boy whose family recently adopted a puppy. This boy must learn how to take care of the puppy.
-  Lead into a discussion on what makes your dog happy by demonstrating to the class. If your dog likes its ears scratched, show your class.
-  Write a list of 5 things that make your dog happy
Examples: It makes our dog happy when she has food, she is happy when she has her toys, she is happy when she goes for long walks, she is happy when she goes swimming and she is happy when she is with her family.
-  Discuss how students would be able to identify if a dog is happy?
Ways to identify if a dog is happy:
Body Language: Wagging of their tail, ears perky etc... (may be different for each animal)
-  After sharing what makes animals happy and how animals show their happiness, discuss how we show we are happy and what makes us happy.
-  After discussion, students will complete their first page of their Pawsitive Steps booklet, “If I were a dog, _____ would make me happy”. Students will share if they were a dog, what would make them happy.
Examples: If I were a dog, having a belly scratch each day would make me happy.

While students are completing their work it is important for your therapy dog to wander around sitting with students who may need some support. When students are done their work, they may have time to spend with the therapy dog.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 3: Animals have feelings too?

Lesson Overview

This lesson will discuss the different ways animals show their feelings. Begin lesson by reading the story: *Animals have feelings too!* By: Karen Lee Stevens (2011). This story shares emotions from A-Z showing students that animals and people share many of the same feelings.


Objectives

Students will learn the different feelings of an animal and connect it to human feelings and emotions.

Curricular connection





Physical Education K-3

Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.

-  Start the lesson by reading “Animals have feelings too!” by Karen Lee Stevens (2011). This story is about a dog who shares many feelings and what each feeling means.

After reading, brainstorm with the class how your classroom animal would show how they are feeling

Examples: When you play with a toy, how would you know if your dog is happy?
How would you know your dog was sad?
Scared?

-  Introduce the class to pictures of feelings and talk about what each feeling means.
-  Have the class play charades with a partner. You will give the pairs each 2 animal pictures. The student will look at the picture of an animal and the student must act it out the feeling in a way that humans would express the particular feeling. Their partners will make guesses on what feeling is being portrayed.
-  After playing charades in pairs, students will discuss some of the ways humans show emotions by identifying that animal have ways of showing emotion through body language, and humans do too. We are similar to animals and we are different.
-  Following discussion, students will fill out the “*Animals have feelings too!*” page in their Pawsitive Steps booklets comparing how an animal shows emotions similar emotions as humans do. Students can draw a picture of them and an animal showing the same emotion.

Each grade level has different requirements for their booklets, for example, students who need extension can add sentences to how they show their feelings. Students who require adaptations can draw a detailed picture.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 4: How do we communicate feelings?

Lesson Overview

Students will discuss ways they have seen animals communicate through discussion, observations and images. Following the lesson, they must complete a booklet comparing ways animals and humans communicate feelings.


Objectives


Students will learn what communication looks like in animals and humans.

Curricular connection

Physical Education K-3


Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.


 Start the lesson by reading “Max talks to me” by Claire Bushwald (2007). Once the story is read, pose the question “Have you ever talked to an animal before?” Start a discussion on whether animals talk and if so how do they communicate. Ask for examples, such as: dogs bark, cat’s meow, birds chirp etc.

 After a discussion on ways animals can communicate, ask the class if they have seen an animal communicate their needs by using body language.

*If there is an animal in the classroom, observe how they communicate.


Ex. Dogs whine when they are sad or bark when they are afraid.

 Show class different pictures of animals and complete the sentences. “This animal is _____ because”. Have the students study the picture cards and choose what emotion would best fit the pictures and why.

 After reading, students will complete the *How I Communicate Feelings* in their *Pawsitive Steps* booklet comparing how humans communicate feelings. We have looked at different pictures of animals and picked emotions we find fitting for each picture.

Students must now draw a picture of themselves showing 3 different emotions.

 Upon completion, students must share one of their drawings their classmates.

 To extend this lesson to older grades students can write a sentence describing each picture and they can identify at least three different emotions.

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 5: What is Empathy?

Lesson Overview

Lesson will start by reading “Baa Humbug” by Mike Jolley (2005). Following the story, students will learn what it means to take perspective of someone else’s thoughts or feelings. By playing a game to introduce the students to perspective taking, they will identify if the scenario read to them is a “tail wagging feeling” or “tail down feeling.”

Scenario cards are found in appendix


Objectives


Students will learn to think about how others might be feelings by learning what empathy is. They will listen to different scenarios and identify how someone else might feel or how an animal might feel. They will relate those feeling to how they would feel if they were treated the same.


Curricular connection


Physical Education K-3


Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.


 Begin by reading “Baa Humbug” by Mike Jolley (2005). In this story, students will be able to empathize with the sheep and make connections to their own world through this story.

 This will lead into a discussion on empathy. Describe empathy as the act of understanding someone else’s thoughts and feelings. In this lesson students are going to practice their empathy skills.

 Introduced students to the “tail wagging” feeling which can be related to happy feelings or emotions related to feeling happy. These are feelings that a dog would excitedly wag their tail for. Then introduce “tails down” feelings. These are feelings that make you feel sad, or blue, or not so great. With your class you could brainstorm ideas of emotions that would fall under each category.

 Each student will get a feeling card (tail wagging and tails down). Read a scenario and students must decide if it is a tail wagging or tails down feeling.

 After playing this game, students will have an idea of a feeling that is related to dog’s tail wagging and tail down hopefully connecting to how the animal or someone else might feel in different situations.

 Activity: Have students write in their *Pawsitive Steps* booklet “My tail wagging feeling would be”. They must draw a detailed picture and older students could write a description. Students would then complete the next part, “My tails down feeling would be”

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson 6: How do animals teach us Empathy?

Lesson Overview

This lesson is designed to review the program students have completed with their classroom therapy animal. It is a chance for them to reflect on the things they have learned throughout the program and how it applies to our emotions.







Objectives

To recap the last 5 lessons designed to teach students about emotions and animals. Students will learn the golden rule and they will complete an activity reflecting on their time spent with their classroom therapy animal.

Curricular connection

Physical Education K-3

Big Ideas: Learning about ourselves and others helps us develop a positive attitude and caring behaviours, which helps us build healthy relationships.

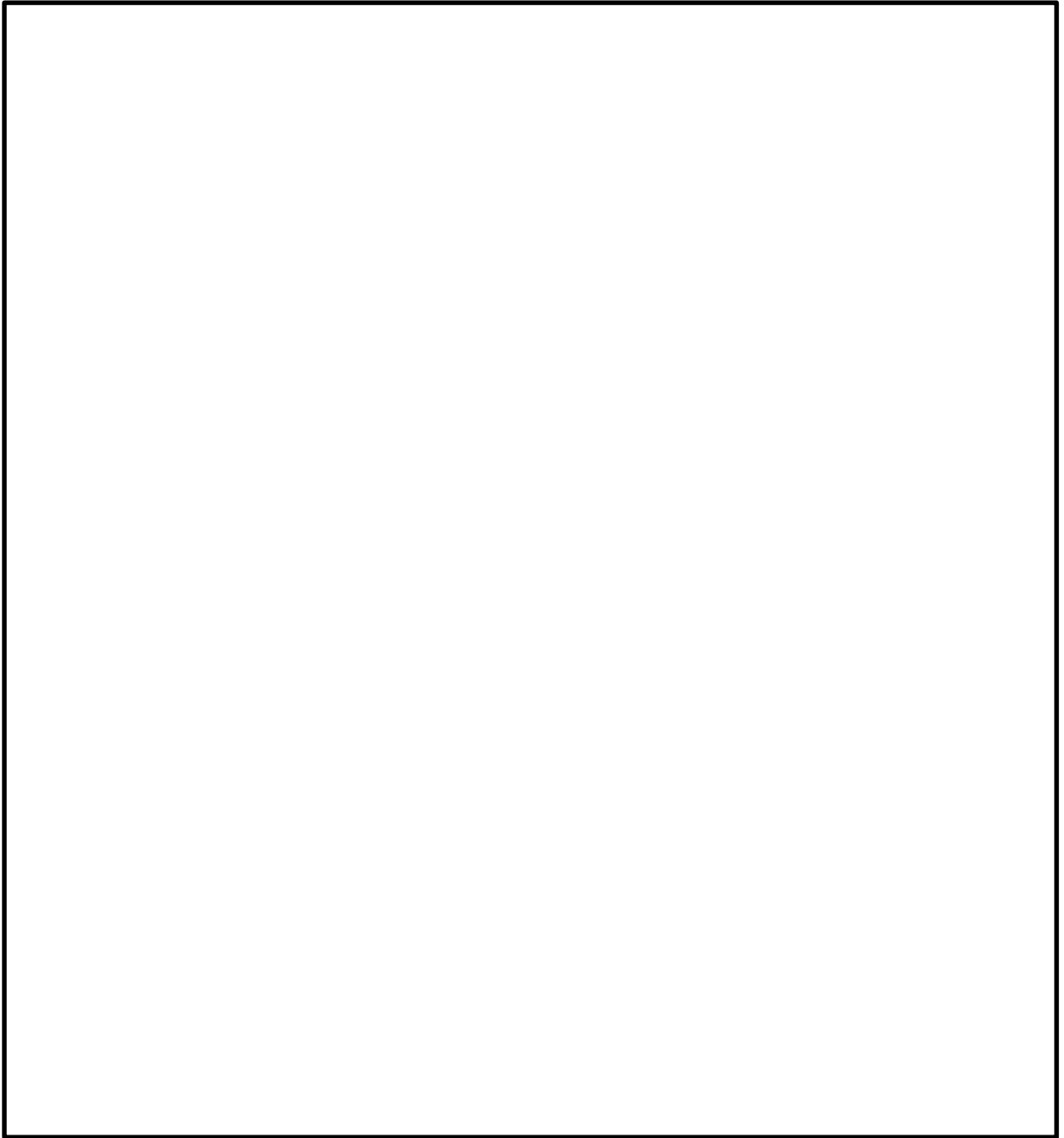
-  Begin by reading “A Kid’s Best Friend” by Maya Ajmera (2002)
-  This story is about the powerful connection between animals and humans. After reading the story, lead into a discussion on with the class about your therapy animal.
-  Ask the students to share one thing they love about their therapy animal. By sharing with the class, they are describing a feeling they encountered while having their therapy animal in their classroom.
-  Once everyone has shared, have the students practice the golden rule “Do unto others and you would have them do unto you”. Read “Do unto Otters” by Laurie Keller (2009).
-  Discuss that animals are a great way to learn about empathy as we must think about their feelings and we can then relate it themselves.
-  To complete Pawsitive Steps program have the students draw a picture and write about their therapy animal and how they felt during their time with their therapy animal, how it made them feel and how they think the animal felt being in the classroom with them.

Taking Pawsitive Steps

By: _____

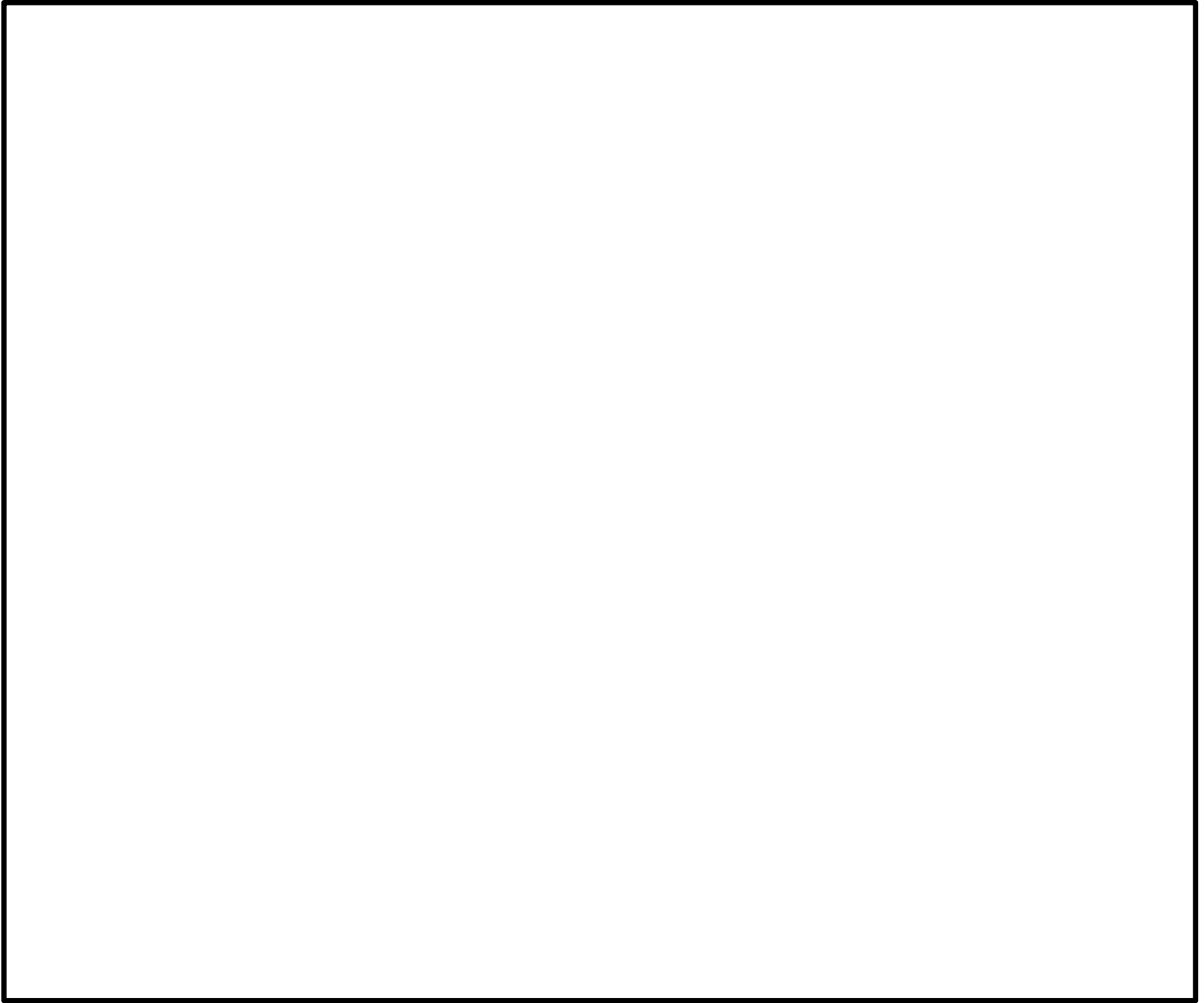


My Classroom Animal and Me

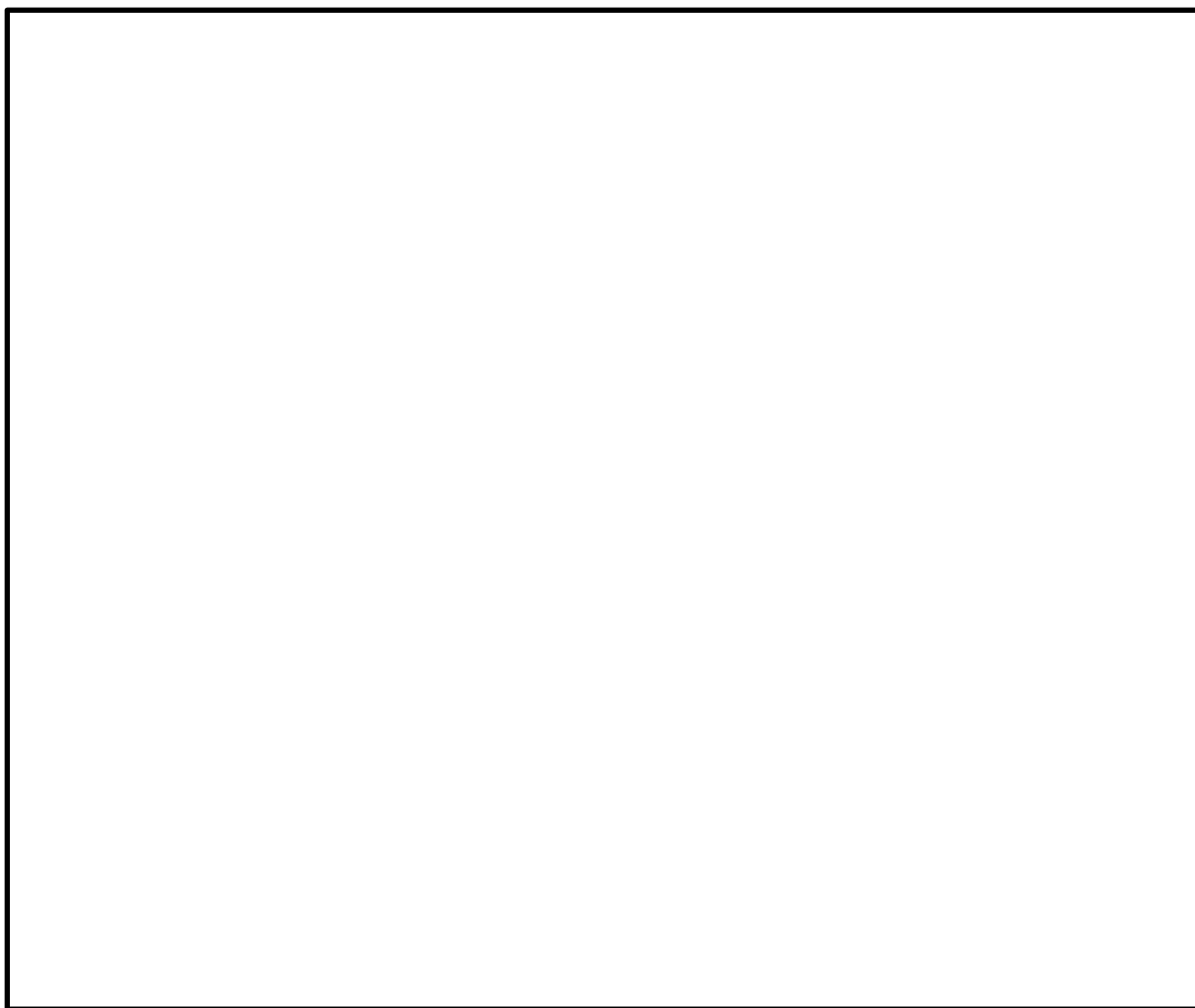


In our classroom we have a
therapy animal. Our animal's
name is _____.

My Classroom Animal Friend and Me



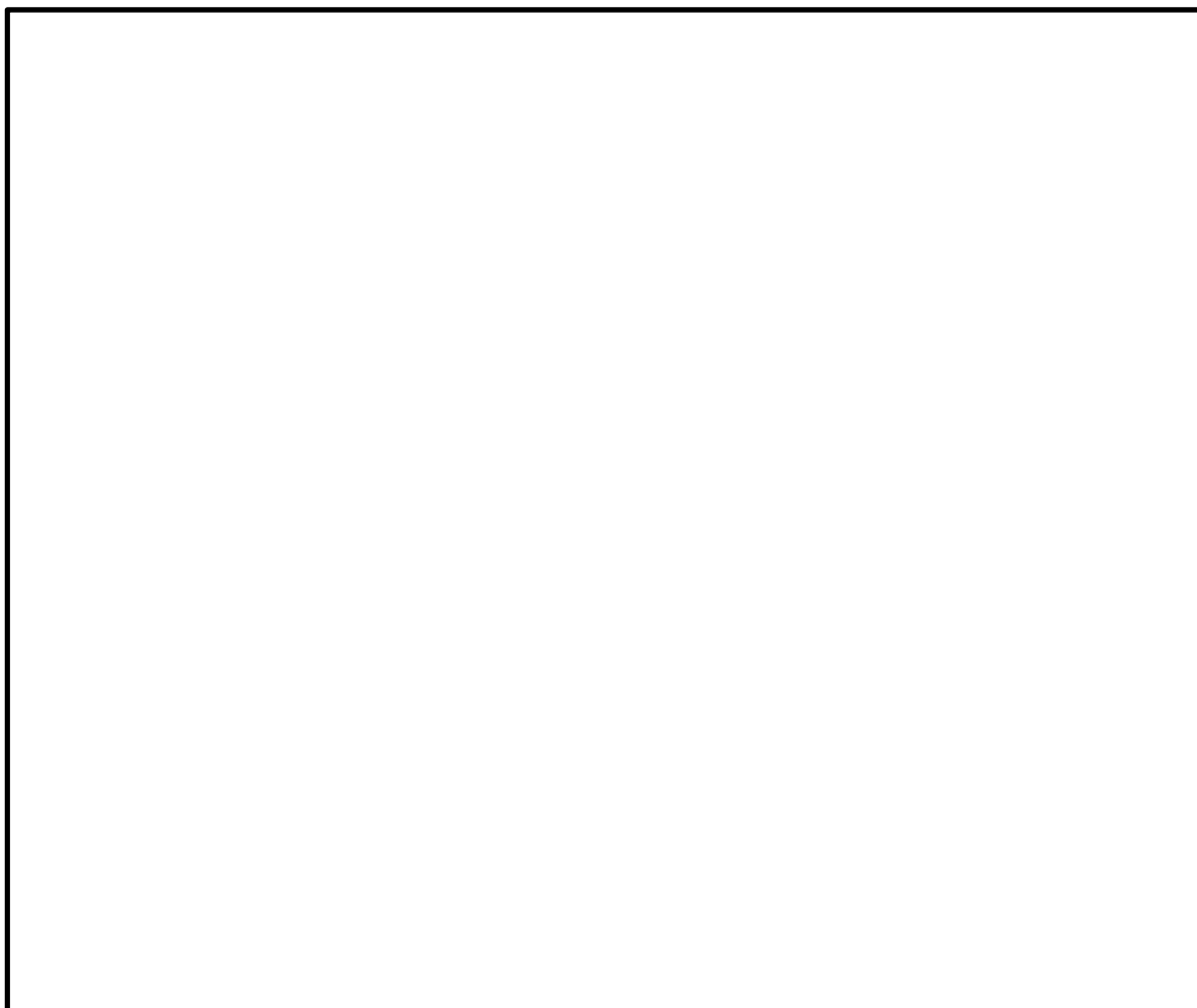
What Makes Me Happy!



If I were a dog, I would be happy
if _____

_____.

What Makes Me Happy!



If I were a dog, I would be happy if...

Animals have Feelings too!

Draw a picture of you showing a feeling and pick an animal and draw a picture of how that animal may look with the same feeling.



This is how I
look when I
feel

_____.



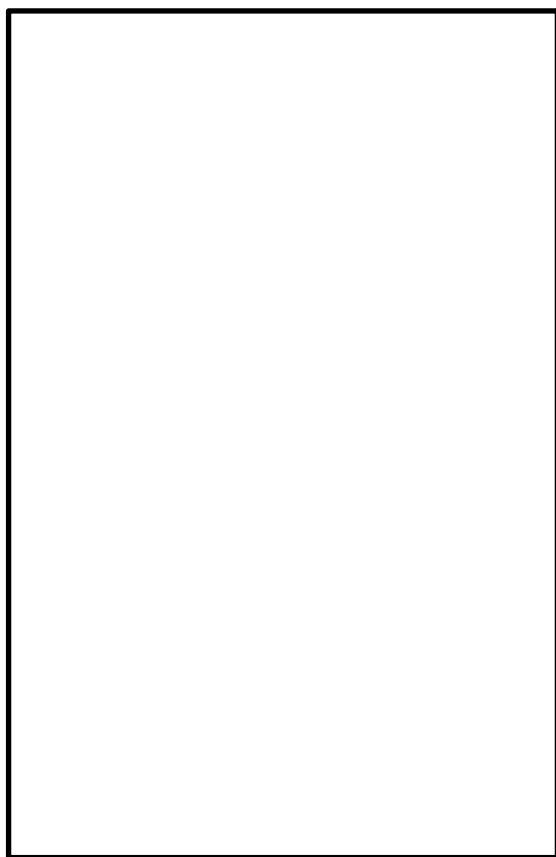
This is how a

looks when it
feels

_____.

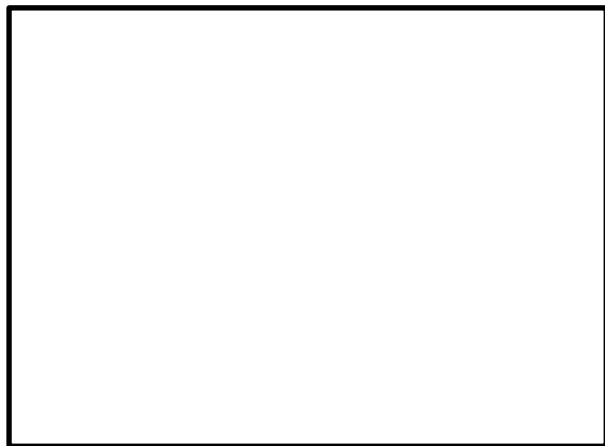
Animals have Feelings too!

Draw a picture of you showing a feeling and pick an animal and draw a picture of how that animal may look with the same feeling. Write how you and your animal of choice look similar or different.



How I Communicate Feelings

Draw a picture of 3 different feelings

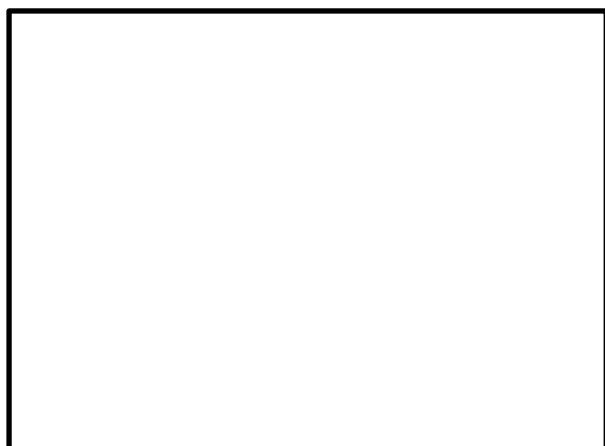
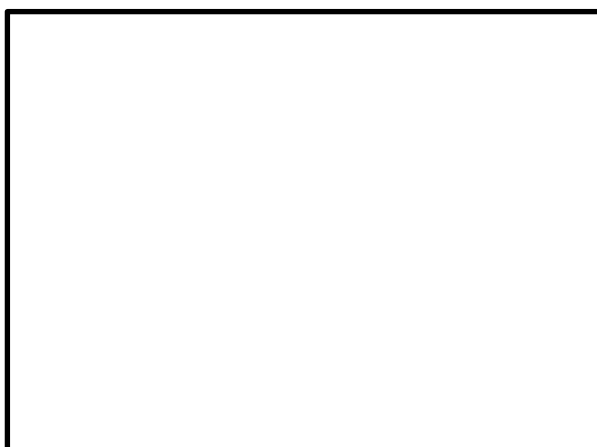


This is how I
look when I am

_____.

This is how I
look when I am

_____.



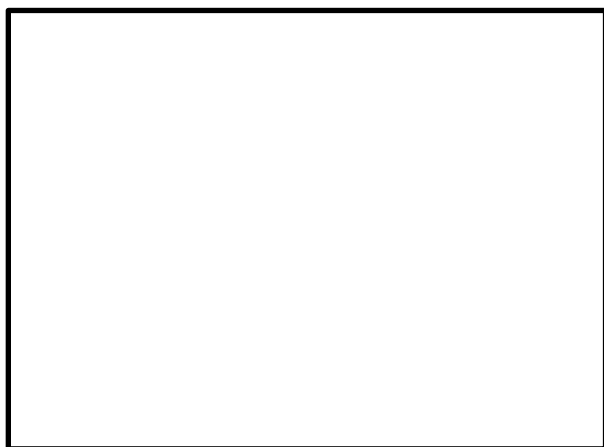
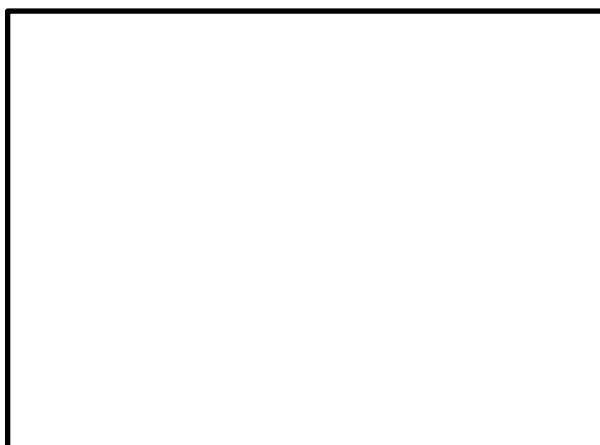
This is how I
look when I am

_____.

How I Communicate Feelings

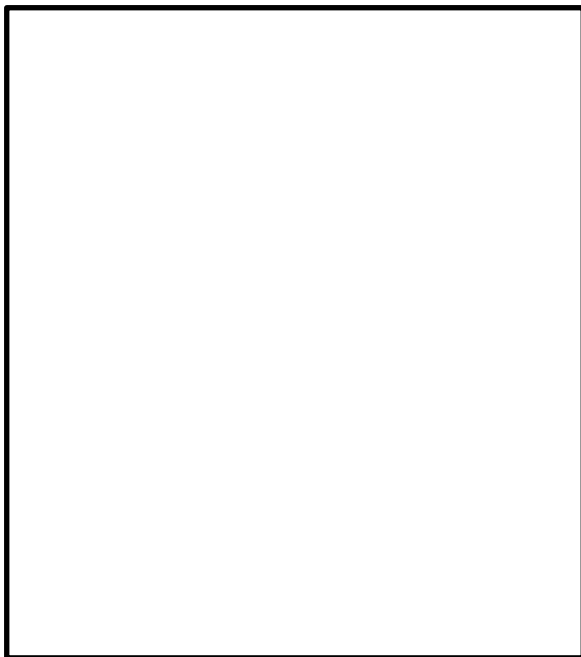
Draw a picture of 3 different feelings and describe your feelings in each picture.



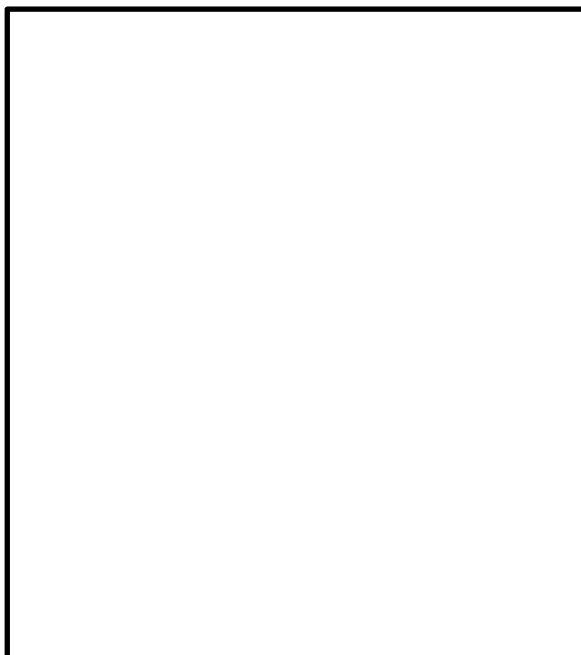


Tails Wagging and Tails Down Feelings

If you were a dog, what would give you a tail wagging feeling and what would give you a tails down feeling.



My tail wagging feeling is
when _____



My tails down feeling is
when _____

Tails Wagging and Tails Down Feelings

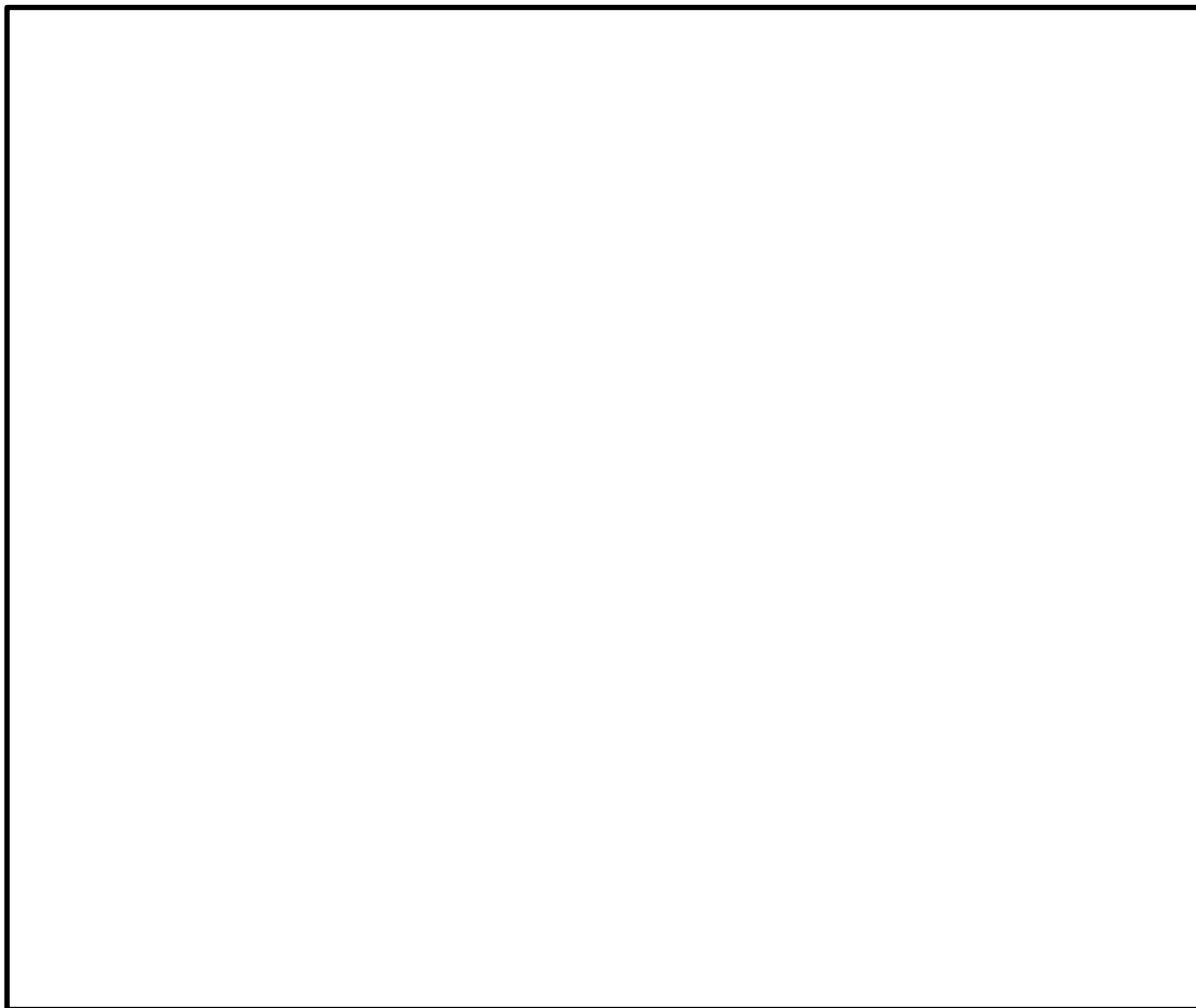
If you were a dog, what would give you a tail wagging feeling and what would give you a tails down feeling. Draw a picture and describe each picture.

Tails wagging
feeling

Tails Down feeling

My favourite part...

Draw a picture of your favourite part of having a therapy animal in your classroom and how it made you feel



What I loved most about having a therapy animal is
my classroom was _____

My favourite part...

Write about your favourite part of having a therapy animal in your classroom and how it made you feel

What I loved most about my therapy animal was

Lesson 5: Animal feeling cards

Angry



(30 amazing pictures of animals showing emotions, 2018)

Lonely



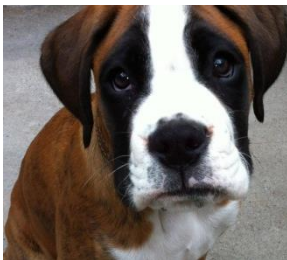
(Small animals talk: canine emotions, 2018)

Happy



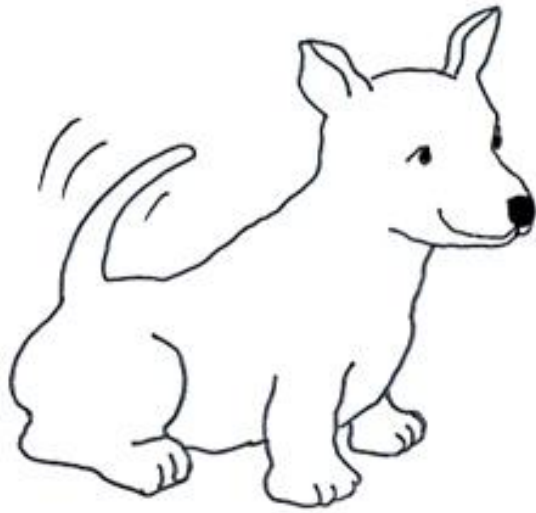
(Google image, 2018)

Sad



(animal sad image, 2018)

Lesson 5: Tail wagging and Tail Down feeling cards and scenarios



(Funny Dog, Cute Dog, 2018)

Scenarios for Tail wagging (happy)
and tail down feelings (sad)

1) My parents said I could get a pet
and I love animals.

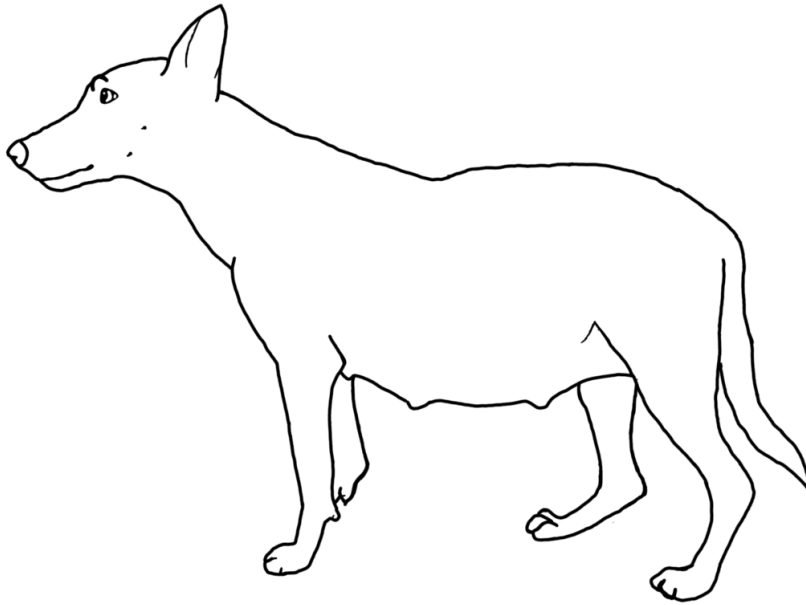
2) I am moving to a new school and
I don't know if I will make new
friends.

3) My dad gives me a present for my
birthday.

4) Our class won a pizza party.

5) I don't get to see my grandpa
because he lives far away.

6) My friend says she doesn't want
to play with me.



(Dog line art, 2018)

Summary

Taking Pawsitive Steps lesson plans were created to incorporate a Chocolate Labrador Retriever therapy dog into an elementary school in British Columbia; however, this project was designed for any teacher looking to incorporate animals into a school environment. Even though this program focuses on lessons with a therapy dog, it can be modified to work around any kind of animal. The goal of this project is to learn through an animal to show empathy, but also provide a school an opportunity to use an animal to assist in all different ways specific to individual schools, such as reaching out to student who would benefit from the support of an animal. This program serves as a dual purpose to teach students lessons and skills and to use an animal as a strategy for support within an elementary school setting.

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